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Bush official gives ICAR high marks

White House science advisor talks to BMW, Timken and Michelin officials during Upstate visit

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If he ever leaves Congress or stops practicing law, U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis could probably land a job as official tour guide at the International Center for Automotive Research, the research campus that Clemson University is developing in Greenville.

In the past, Inglis, R-Greenville, has shown ICAR to two influential colleagues in the U.S. House as well as to Arden Bement, director of the National Science Foundation.

Tuesday, he hosted John Marburger, President Bush's top science advisor, for a tour of the automotive research park along Interstate 85.

Marburger was briefed by three of Clemson's corporate partners at ICAR -- BMW Manufacturing Co., Michelin North America and The Timken Co. -- before heading to the BMW Performance Center in Greer for a press conference and to test drive an M3.

Advertisement Inglis, chairman of the Research Subcommittee of the House Science Committee, said he's taking "any opportunity to show decision-makers in Washington the capacities we have here in the Fourth District.

"We wanted (Marburger) to see ICAR, to hear from BMW, to hear from Michelin, to hear from Timken, and to hopefully cause him to file away that South Carolina is a place that will do some of this work on smart cars and fuels of the future," Inglis said.

Inglis said he also hopes Marburger will help convince President Bush to make energy security and ending the nation's dependence on Mideast oil the main goal of his administration.


At the BMW test track in Greer, Marburger touted the American Competitiveness Initiative, a Bush administration plan to keep America competitive in science and technology by boosting research, education and entrepreneurship.

Appearing with him were executives from Timken, Michelin, Fluor Corp. and General Electric Co.

Students from two schools in Union County discussed projects they completed as part of "A World In Motion," a curriculum developed by the Society for Automotive Engineers designed to boost student interest in math, science and engineering.

Inglis' office has worked with companies to bring the curriculum to schools in Greenville, Spartanburg and Union counties.

During an interview, Marburger, a former university president who has a doctorate in applied physics and used

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to run the Brookhaven National Laboratory, said he was impressed with ICAR.

"I think this wedding, the partnership between industry and higher education is very important to keep our industries competitive and to keep them continually re-inventing themselves to keep up with the rapidly changing technology," Marburger said.

He said Clemson would benefit from the increased federal research funding that Bush has called for as part of the American Competitiveness Initiative.
